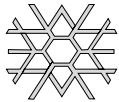


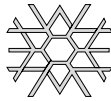
The State Grants Exchange

First Quarter Fiscal Year 1998

Providing Health and Safety Training to the Nation's Miners - - The Right Thing to do!!!



Winter Alert



As winter approaches, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) is once again warning coal operators and miners that colder weather creates more hazards in the mines. MSHA's Winter Alert campaign, which runs annually from October through March, emphasizes increased vigilance underground during the winter months.

All coal mines contain methane, and when the barometric pressure drops during colder weather, methane can migrate more easily into the mine atmosphere, increasing the risk of an explosion. Furthermore, dry winter air results in drier conditions underground, and this makes coal dust more likely to get suspended in the mine atmosphere, which also can contribute to an explosion.

“Thanks to the cooperative efforts of coal mine operators, miners and others concerned with mine safety, we have made strides to reduce the risk of explosions, but each year the risks are very real,” said J. Davitt McAteer, Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health. “Mining continues to be dangerous and we must be as vigilant today as we have been in the past if we are to deal successfully with these risks.”

Historically, some of the Nation's worst mining disasters occurred between October and March and, since 1900, more than 250 fatal coal mine explosions have caused the loss of nearly 6,600 lives. In December 1907, an explosion in Monongah, West Virginia, killed 362 miners, making it the worst mining accident in U.S. history.

This year's Winter Alert slogan — **Only YOU can prevent mine explosions!** — appears on safety signs distributed to all underground coal mines. MSHA also is disseminating Winter Alert calendars that list the dates, locations and numbers of fatalities of past coal mine explosions. When posted in mine offices, bath houses, underground sections and other areas where miners work, these signs and calendars will serve as a constant reminder of the increased dangers that exist this time of year.

MSHA Reminders

Consistently follow the mine-approved ventilation plan.

Conduct thorough pre-shift, on-shift and weekly checks for methane and other hazards.

Keep potential ignition sources out of working areas; give special attention to maintenance of bleeder systems in worked-out areas, to ensure that methane from these areas cannot accumulate and become a hazard.

Complete rockdusting in all areas of the mine.

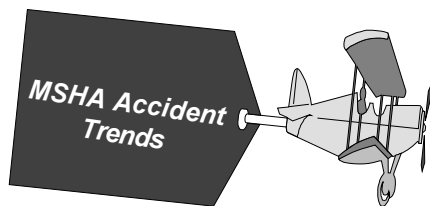
Never smoke or carry smoking materials into an underground mine.



*Office of Information
Mine Safety and Health Administration*

Message from the Assistant Secretary

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for assisting the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) in making miners aware of the rising trend of fatal accidents and health problems at surface metal and nonmetal mines. Being a part of the State Grant network, you are in a position to meet with miners and mine operators to distribute MSHA publications and training materials. As a result of our teamwork, the mining industry is better informed of the unfortunate fatal accident trend and the risk of serious occupational illnesses.



In the past 18 months, metal and nonmetal mines have experienced an alarming increase in fatalities, particularly involving powered haulage and drownings. In addition, 14 supervisors were killed while performing nonsupervisory tasks. As we continue our efforts to help improve the industry's safety record, you may find it effective to focus attention in these areas. I have enclosed a listing of some recent safety related materials that you may find useful when conducting training. If you would like to order any of these materials, please contact the National Mine Health and Safety Academy at (304) 256-3257. When new materials are developed, we will keep you informed.



As you may know, in a number of these accidents, lack of training was considered to be a contributing factor. As you are aware, MSHA is prohibited from enforcing training requirements at many metal and nonmetal operations, therefore your ability to reach these industries, and small mines in particular, is essential. I look forward to your continued contributions to protecting miners' safety and health. Again, thank you.

J. Davitt McAteer
*Assistant Secretary for
Mine Safety and Health*

MSHA Metal/Nonmetal Register



The Metal and Nonmetal Mine Safety and Health Inspector Register is open to new applicants from November 5 through December 5. ***THIS IS BIG NEWS!*** The last time the "Register" was open to new applications was waaaaaaay back in 1994. In the near future, 33 general schedule GS-9 level Metal and Nonmetal mine inspector positions will be advertised for locations throughout the United States. These positions will be filled by applicants who are on the "Register". To be eligible for consideration, applicants must submit an application to the MSHA Delegated Examining Unit (DEU), 4015 Wilson Boulevard, Room 503, Arlington, Virginia, 22203. To request an application package, applicants may call (703) 235-1352, or they should pick up an application package in any MSHA district or field office, or the Department of Labor Regional Personnel Offices. The entire announcement packet will also be listed on the **MSHA INTERNET** Homepage at <http://www.msha.gov>, or on the Office of Personnel Management's INTERNET Homepage at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>. To be considered, applications must be postmarked by the closing date, of December 5, 1997. Ten point veterans may apply to this register at any time.



MSHA is very interested in finding qualified candidates to fill mine inspector positions. Please share this recruitment information with the miners in your state.

MSHA Human Resources Division

State of Wisconsin Prioritizing Safety Requirements

By Robert N. Cooke, CSP



It is difficult at best to stay on top of the ever changing world of safety and related regulatory compliance.

Many companies are faced with compliance for regulations from more than one agency for example:

MSHA, OSHA and DOT, not to mention the environmental regulations which most companies face.

While it is easy to become overwhelmed by all of these requirements, ignorance or avoidance will only lead to accidents, injuries, fatalities, fines and lawsuits. While it may seem overwhelming, the task of creating a solid safety effort can be accomplished at a reasonable cost with solid dedication and commitment from management and an organized approach to implementing necessary programs.

Assuming management is committed, the first step in the process is to take a step back and assess what is in place and what needs to be done. This can be most easily accomplished by conducting an audit of the safety effort.

An audit can focus on any or all of the three basic components of any good safety effort including:
Regulatory Compliance Activities: Compliance with all applicable MSHA, OSHA, DOT, regulations

Loss Avoidance Activities:

The proactive aspect - Activities aimed at preventing loss such as behavioral safety training, incentive programs, safety committees, your own safety inspections, etc.

Claims Management Activities: The reactive aspect - Reducing the cost impact of accidents after they occur such as restricted duty programs.

Possibly the simplest place to start the audit is in the area of regulatory compliance because there are easily obtainable standards which can be used for comparison. The audit process needs to be led by someone who is knowledgeable about pertinent regulations and

their interpretations. This could be someone from within the organization or a person obtained from the outside. The outcome of the audit should include a list of applicable regulations, a description of current compliance activities by the firm, a list of what needs to be done to enhance compliance (this will be called the safety improvement list) and an estimate on what these improvements will cost.

In most cases, all changes cannot be made at once so the next step is to prioritize the items on the safety improvement list. An easy way to accomplish this is to develop a scoring method. While every organization may wish to use different scoring criteria, an example of a potential scoring method is presented here.

For each item, ask the following questions and assign points as indicated (An item may score in one, two or even three categories)

1. Could failure to make this change result in immediate serious injury or death? **(5 points)**

2. Could failure to make this change result in a chronic illness? (such as silicosis or hearing loss) **(3 points)**

3. Is this a high priority item by the regulatory agency? **(1 point)**

Once scoring is completed, items with higher scores should have a higher priority than lower scored items. When ties occur, either subjective selection or possibly cost factors could be applied as tie breakers.

Finally, a time line should be developed for each item depicting when work on each project will start and an estimated completion date. This would be an excellent application of project planning software.

While this process in and of itself will not prevent citations, it will demonstrate the organizations commitment to accomplishing regulatory compliance and safety process improvement.



Happy Holidays from the MSHA State Grants Program Office Staff



State Grants Note Pad

State Grants Business Meeting
February 9-13, 1998
National Mine Health and Safety Academy
For Information Contact:
Linda Davis
(703) 235-1400

Minnesota Mine Safety Association
Safety Conference
February 26, 1998
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
For More Information Contact:
Dave Couillard
(218) 720-5648

Joint Sponsored Health and
Safety Conference
February 26, 1998
The Inn at Reading
1040 N. Park Road
Wyomissing Pennsylvania
For Information Contact:
Charlie McNeal
610-372-2761

Holmes Safety Association
Executive Committee Meeting
February 26-27, 1998
Minneapolis-St Paul, Minnesota

Grants Manager's Corner

Special Announcement!!!! Andrea Hricko, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health Administration resigned from the Agency on November 1, 1997. Ms. Hricko has been with the Agency for 3 years and has initiated numerous health and safety programs for the mining industry. Some of her accomplishments include the silica awareness campaign, health and safety issues addressed by the State Grants Program, and campaigns to address work related health and safety illnesses in the mining community.

We wish Andrea well in her future endeavors and appreciate the support she gave to the State Grants Program.

Reminder!!!! Effective October 1, 1997, the State Grants Program will be implementing the new technical reporting system (***mid-year and final accomplishment reports***). This new system includes the reporting of the new standardized health and safety issues submitted in your programs' grant proposal. An instructional video and manual was sent to each state grantee. Included with these materials was a diskette with the new ACCESS database for the system. Please review the materials and get familiar with the new system. The first report (mid-year) is not due until April 30, 1998.

Also, if your program has not submitted the fourth quarter technical reports for fiscal year 1997, please do so immediately. The reports were due on October 31, 1997.

James Baugher
State Grants Program Manager

Remember, if you would like to submit an article or upcoming event in the Exchange, contact Greg Graham on (703) 235-1400.